

The Beatitudes

A Study of Matthew 5:1-16

Leader's Guide

This is a five lesson study of the message of the Beatitudes as it applies to the 21st century. Each lesson should take about an hour to complete. It is written to elicit discussion to enhance the understanding of these precious words of Jesus.

Written by Marilyn Miller, Staff Minister, and reviewed for theological accuracy by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary President-emeritus David Valleskey.

Copyright 2017 by Marilyn Miller. Permission granted to download free of charge and duplicate for Bible study.

Free will offerings accepted at [Donate Online - WELS](#) by selecting Women's Ministry from the drop-down menu.

**Introduction & *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*
Matthew 5:1-3**

Opening Prayer

Read Matthew 5:1-12

1. Describe your first impressions of the Sermon.

Possible thoughts: Simplicity of the message yet profoundly deep concepts; Something that cannot be understood by unbelievers; Interesting juxtaposition of a blessing and how the believer is blessed; Something that seems hard to live up to; Something that takes on new dimensions as faith grows stronger...

2. How would you summarize the message of the Sermon?

The Sermon seems to be God's code of conduct for his followers: life under the gracious rule of God for the genuine child of the Heavenly Father. These call us to life decisions much different than what would be natural, worldly attitudes. Indeed, if the church would conform to the standards of this world, it would be no different than the world.

Throughout the Bible we hear how God calls his people to himself, saying they are a holy people set apart to belong to him; they are to obey him and do his will. God told the Israelites to refrain from doing what they did in Egypt or what they saw in Canaan because he alone is their covenant God and they his special people. (Possibly ask for some examples of when the Children of Israel forgot their uniqueness and the consequences they suffered.)

In the New Testament God calls his followers his ambassadors to the world to carry out his will. This Beatitudes portion of the Sermon helps his believers understand how they stand out from the rest of the dark, unbelieving world by giving them eight principal marks of Christian character^[1] and conduct along with the divine blessings which rest on those who exhibit these marks. Only with God's grace can a believer begin to live up to these standards. With the Holy Spirit in our hearts, continual growth in faith as fed by Word and Sacrament, and daily contrition, repentance and forgiveness, a child of God will strive to live to these standards.

3. From 5:1-2, who is Jesus' audience?

He is speaking to the crowd of believers who are following him. As he sits and begins to preach, he would be following the familiar pattern of a rabbi who sits as in a position of authority and the "congregation" sits around him to learn from him. Today, Jesus' words are meant for all believers. These are Christ's own spiritual specifications for every Christian. He is not speaking to the unbeliever as these things would be foolishness to them without having the faith to understand.

4. Scan chapter 4. Do you think Jesus' sermon came at the beginning, middle or end of his earthly ministry? Why?

Chapter 4 tells us of Jesus' temptation in the desert which happens shortly after his baptism, so it would seem the sermon is not at the end of his ministry. He also has performed some miracles and

has amassed a following so we can assume it is not too early in this ministry. Many theologians believe the Sermon was preached at the height of Jesus' earthly ministry.

5. Notice there are eight beatitudes. The first four describe the believer's relationship with God. The second four describe how that relationship impacts the believer's relationship with other people.

The word "blessed" can be equated to happiness...but being happy is subjective. How can we understand the use of this word so that it is more universal? John 15:11 may help us understand.

Our Creator knows best how to make us happy and how obeying his moral laws can fulfill us. Jesus isn't describing how we feel, but how God thinks of us as we seek to please him with our attitudes and actions. We are blessed because of God's grace and mercy, because we are the true children of God, because we have the assurance of eternal life in heaven. This is a happiness or joy that extends beyond an emotion so that as believers there is a constant flow of joy in Christ even if, for a time we are sad or sorrowful. As we study each individual beatitude, we will see how these blessing apply both to life in this world as well as to the full harvest we will realize in heaven.

Webster defines "beatitude" as a state of utmost bliss. Let's discover why this word is used for this portion of Scripture.

Matthew 5:3 – "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

6. Keeping in mind that we are talking about spiritual characteristics, describe what you think Jesus meant by those "poor in spirit?" Look at Psalm 34:6, Is 41:17-18, Luke 4:18-19 to help.

Jesus is not glorifying physical poverty. He is talking of those who are spiritually poverty-stricken, bankrupt before God, realizing they have absolutely nothing of merit to offer God. The believer knows without question that he cannot please God on his own and his only hope is a Savior. This is the message that he shares with the unbelieving world. Someone who is poor in spirit will readily and frequently ask God for his mercy and forgiveness and bow in deep submission to his will.

7. Contrast this attitude with that of an unbeliever, either in our world today or as the Pharisees at the time of Jesus. Give some examples.

An unbeliever could look on this as physical poverty, something to be avoided at all costs, not something to be praised and sought after. He could think that God looks upon him based on his good works earning him a good possibility of heaven. An unbeliever may want to think of himself as a pretty good person. An unbeliever could thank God for all of the laws/rules they have kept (as the Pharisees did) being grateful they aren't like so many other really awful people in the world. An unbeliever could totally miss the point of what is being said as it sounds like foolishness to him. An unbeliever may compromise on what they think God desires, ignoring their conscience so they can be well thought of by others or advance themselves and their opinions.

In Mary's song recorded in Luke 1:53 we are told God has filled the hungry with good things and has sent the rich away hungry.

8. How can one possibly attain a “poor in spirit” attitude?

This is a gift from God given to us entirely by his grace. As faith is worked in our hearts God changes our attitude so that we desire to be “poor in spirit”, and as our faith grows, we gain a deeper and deeper understanding of what this characteristic means for our lives. This is not a simple desire, but a deeply seated need to submit to his will as we realize our utter helplessness. God didn't give us a standard that can't possibly be met. We can't receive this blessing by attaining Jesus' standard, rather, as we live our sanctified lives we give evidence of what God's free grace has worked in us.

9. How might one receive the blessing of the “kingdom of heaven” in your daily life?

As believers acknowledge their spiritual poverty and live accordingly, God's grace and mercy fills them with a peace and confidence as they navigate the paths of this world. This is a gift bestowed on the believer at the moment faith enters their heart. They have the peace of true and complete forgiveness.

The faithful may avoid some of the earthly penalties of sin (e.g. imprisonment, broken marriages, conflict or some diseases) though we are told we will have difficulties in this life. They live lives with much joy because they get their rewards from seeing God's will done, and can look beyond the earthly problems knowing we are only passing through this world with the best yet to come. Believers don't waste time contemplating questions and worrying about things that plague the world (eg, where did we come from, where are we going, what happens when we die, what if the world can no longer sustain human life). They lean on God for the decisions and problems in this life. Their lives are filled with other believers who bring much joy, companionship and encouragement.

How does a disciple receive the blessing of the “kingdom of heaven” in the future?

Only the believer will spend eternity with Christ in heaven where the perfection of creation will be restored. With this blessing the believer is pronounced fortunate to the highest degree. We can't even imagine the glory of heaven and all that God has stored up for us. No illness, pain, sin – only a perfect desire and ability to praise and worship God. Our every need will be met. We will give God perfect honor, glory and praise.

10. Share something that this study has helped you understand better. Share something that this will move you to do differently.

Closing Thought:

Hymn: *From Depths of Woe I Cry to You*

CW 305

From depths of woe I cry to you: Lord, hear me I implore you.
Bend down your gracious ear to me; my prayer let come before you.
If you kept record of my sin and held against me what I've been,
How could I stand before you?

Your love and grace alone avail to blot out my transgression.

The best and holiest deeds must fail to break sin's dread oppression.
Before you none can boasting stand, but all must fear your strict demand
And live alone by mercy.

Therefore my hope is in the Lord and not in my own merit;
It rests upon his faithful Word to them of contrite spirit.
That he is merciful and just – this is my comfort and my trust.
His help I wait with patience.

My soul is waiting for the Lord as one who longs for morning;
No watcher waits with greater hope, than I for his returning.
I hope as Israel in the Lord; he sends redemption through his Word.
We praise him for his mercy.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Precious Savior, Holy Spirit, you are truly worthy of our praise. Your love and mercy are more than we can fathom and yet they fill each minute of every day. We thank you for graciously giving us a Savior that we may be reconciled with you, and for working faith in our hearts that we may be fully blessed by your bountiful gifts. We thank you for giving us a desire to please you with our lives and for revealing yourself through your Holy Word. Make our sins visible to us, work repentance in our hearts and we humbly ask you to forgive us (especially for....). Be near when temptations come that we may not fall into sin. Renew our hearts that we may live our lives to your glory. We come in the name of Jesus, confident that you hear and answer our prayers. Amen.

Lesson 2

Blessed are those who Mourn, Blessed are the Meek **Matthew 5:4-5**

Opening Prayer

Read Matthew 5:3-5

11. Review: what key thoughts do you remember about being “poor in spirit” (5:3)

I recognize I am morally bankrupt, can do absolutely nothing to please God and am in desperate need of a Savior. This knowledge does not come from within me but is purely a gift of grace. The resulting attitude is very different than one exhibited by an unbeliever. Those who are poor in spirit are blessed in this world as well as in the future. This blessing belongs only to the believer.

Matthew 5:4 – “Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.”

12. Keeping in mind that we are talking about spiritual characteristics, describe what you think Jesus meant by “those who mourn.” You might want to look at some or all of the following passages for additional insight: Acts 14:22b, Psalm 119:136, Ezekiel 9:4, Romans 8: 18-20,24-25.

This mourning is not that of bereavement or the loss of something that has special meaning to us. It goes much deeper. As the Holy Spirit works faith in hearts, he works in those hearts the desire to throw off the slavery to sin and live a life that pleases God. These believing hearts grieve when they sin and beg God for his mercy and forgiveness. With confidence in the promise of forgiveness, which is theirs through Christ, faithful people beg God to help them amend their ways. With confidence in God's mercy, they daily struggle with sin, repent and seek to please God.

These believing hearts mourn as they see the profound effect of sin in their lives and in this world, so visible in the many words, attitudes and actions that are contrary to what pleases God. We know sin will be present as long as we are in this world, but the desire to please God grows stronger as our faith is fed through Word and Sacrament. As faith increases so does mourning.

The Old Testament prophets and writers wept over the sins of Israel, Jesus wept over sin and the consequences of judgment and death, over the impenitence of Jerusalem. Paul also wept over the sins of this world. Do we make light of our own sins or those of others in our lives? Do we just let sins go unaddressed? In heartfelt repentance do you weep over your sins, over the state of this country and society, asking God to forgive and interfere with the scheming of Satan?

Christians mourn because the world is not in tune with Christ and they are not in tune with the world. They mourn for the world, for its guilt and its fate. They see the ship sinking as the party goes on and on, masses of souls lost for eternity day after day. Christians mourn because they see the dark, putrid world gather more and more people to its ways as Satan extends his reach and sets about creating division and disharmony. Jesus' disciples are strangers in this world, uncomfortable, unwelcome and ridiculed.

13. How is this deep spiritual mourning comforted? Read some of the following passages for insight: Philippians 4:6-7, 2 Corinthians 7:10, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, Romans 15:13, Romans 5:1-2, Luke 22:19-20

The only possible comfort is heartfelt contrition and repentance, followed by the free, complete forgiveness of God. We are comforted when we attend the Lord's Supper, eat the true body and blood of Christ, and, joyfully hear the words "you are at peace with God." Comfort comes from a continual focus on our risen and ascended Savior, who sits at the right hand of the Father. We are comforted as we intercede for this world, ask God to change the hearts of those who sin and know with confidence he has the power to do this. We are comforted when we ask God to help us lovingly show sinners their errors and work to spread the Gospel in unity. We are comforted when the family of believers lovingly shares their encouragement with us. We are comforted when we prayerfully ask that God's will be done in this world and ask God to use us as he would to accomplish his will. As our mourning rises to God, he sends us a constant flow of comfort.

14. Discuss how this spiritual mourning and comforting may change the way you think of your own sins and those of your family, friends and society? What will this move you to do?

Matthew 5:5 – "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

15. What do you think Jesus meant when he talks of those who are meek? How does God help us understand what it means to be meek? See 2 Corinthians 10:1, Matthew 21:5, Ephesians 4:2

The Greek word "meek" means to be mild, gentle, patient. Christian meekness is an inner quality of humility that permeates our relationship with God and in turn, with others. This meekness is the humble attitude we have based on a true understanding of our own sinful condition; it is the complete surrender to God's will that makes the things of this world meaningless.

In the world someone seen as meek is often treated with condescension and is equated with being weak or inferior. For a Christian, being meek is recognition of the inferiority of the sinner before his holy God. The concept of forgiveness and restoration play no role in the worldly understanding of meekness but are key components of the Christian definition of meekness.

Jesus is described as meek on his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. A review of Jesus' words, attitude and actions during Holy Week alone give us an exceptional example of what it means for a Christian to be meek.

Christian meekness does not allow room for hypocrisy, resentment, anger, superiority or vengeance – these are proof that meekness is absent. It is of interest to see how being meek builds on the previous discussion about being mournful, which builds on being poor in spirit.

16. How can one possibly attain a meek attitude? Romans 6:6-7, 1 Peter 5:5-7, Philippians 2:3.

This is entirely a gift from God given to us by his grace. Godly meekness is not a natural quality but is an outgrowth of the new (wo)man given us in faith. As faith is worked in our hearts the Holy Spirit changes our attitude so that we desire to be imitators of Christ.

Using Jesus as our example we seek to put aside our natural, sinful response to the things of this world and truly meditate on “What would Jesus say or do” in every situation, and then react accordingly.

We will never attain true meekness this side of heaven but it is something for which we strive. As we constantly fall short, we ask God to forgive our many sinful thoughts and actions, to remove the sins from our heart and to give us the strength to continue working toward the standard set for us. Then we go forward with our sanctified lives, giving evidence of what God’s grace has worked in us. Practice doesn’t make perfect, but it does help us to improve.

17. What does it mean to “inherit the earth?” See Isaiah 57:13, 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, Psalm 37:16-17

This is more than inheriting the new heaven and earth when Jesus returns - eternity in heaven - which is included in this inheritance. The meek are heirs of the entire earth today. They receive rest, peace and blessings from God that are foreign to the unbeliever. They are able to be content with the lot they have been given.

Under God’s direction, this earth is a blessing to both the believer and the unbeliever. But the way of Christ is different than the way of the world. In this world God makes all things work together for good to those who go about his work (Romans 8:28) and this is a blessing that only the believer enjoys. The godless boast of all their riches and yet any real possession eludes their grasp.

18. Share something that this study has helped you understand better. Share something that this will move you to do differently.

On your own, read Psalm 37 several times this next week to receive the comfort he offers his disciples.

Closing Thought:

Comfort, Comfort All My People

CW 11

“Comfort, comfort all my people; speak of peace” so says our God.
“Comfort those who sit in darkness, groaning from their sorrows’ load.
Speak to all Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
Tell them that their sins I cover, that their warfare now is over.”

All their sins our God will pardon, blotting out each dark misdeed;
All that well deserve his anger he no more will see or heed.
They have suffered many a day; now their griefs have passed away.
God will change their aching sadness into ever springing gladness.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Precious Savior, Holy Spirit, you are truly worthy of our praise. Your love and mercy are more than we can fathom and yet they fill each minute of every day. We thank you for graciously giving us a Savior that we may be reconciled with you, and for working faith in our hearts that we may be fully blessed by your bountiful gifts. We thank you for giving us a desire to please you with our lives and for revealing yourself through your Holy Word. Make our sins visible to us, work repentance in our hearts and we humbly ask you to forgive us (especially for....). Be near when temptations come that we may not fall into sin. Renew our hearts that we may live our lives to your glory. We come in the name of Jesus, confident that you hear and answer our prayers. Amen.

Lesson 3

Blessed are Those who Hunger and Thirst; Blessed are the Merciful **Matthew 5:6-7**

Opening Prayer

Read Matthew 5:3-7

19. Review: what key thoughts do you remember from the two earlier studies?

I recognize I am morally bankrupt, can do absolutely nothing to please God and am in desperate need of a Savior. This knowledge does not come from within me but is purely a gift of grace. The resulting attitude is very different than one exhibited by an unbeliever. The beatitudes build on each other. As I recognize how morally bankrupt I am, I am moved to repent for my sins as well as those of the entire world. The magnitude of the comfort God gives me through repentance moves me, in meekness, to submit totally to his will.

Matthew 5:6 – “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

20. Describe what you think Jesus meant when he talked of “those who hunger and thirst for righteous”. See Psalm 42:1, Psalm 84:1-2, Psalm 143:6, or Matthew 6:33

The word righteous describes something that is right with God, in alignment with his will. The concept of righteousness is fundamental to all of Scripture. One is pronounced righteous by God according to his divine standards alone. No man has ever discovered a way to turn a guilty, sinful soul into a righteous one in God’s eyes. This is beyond human ability. People may declare themselves righteous but this is nothing more than the criminal telling the court he is innocent even though there is more than enough evidence to prove his guilt. Only through the perfect life and sacrificial death of Christ can anyone be declared righteous in God’s court.

Someone who hungers and thirsts after this truth has a strong spiritual desire to commit her life to God and share the good news of the gospel with the world. This heartfelt desire influences all of the believer’s priorities and choices. This hunger and thirst is given to us as the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts. This hunger and thirst grow stronger as we continue using the Word and Sacraments, as we continue to feed on Christ’s righteousness.

21. How can one develop a hunger and thirst for righteousness?

This hunger is entirely a result of the faith given us by grace. However, as we respond to this faith by making the Word a cherished part of our daily routine, by frequently partaking of the Lord’s Supper, by leaning on the blessings of our baptism (use your catechism to review those!), God makes this hunger become more intense.

22. How can this hunger and thirst be filled? Genesis 15:6, Romans 1:17, 3:21-24, or Revelation 7:15-17 give us some ideas.

Satisfying this intense need is entirely a gift from God. There can be no law kept, service performed, or credit earned that begins to satisfy this need. Anything we try to do only results in our being less satisfied as we realize the hopelessness of our condition. Daily we cry out for forgiveness and daily, in mercy, God satisfies this need. Our hunger and thirst continues and even increases as God fills us and we realize how totally dependent we are on Jesus as our Savior. As this intense need continues to be filled we are blessed. But, if we ever decide this hunger and thirst is quenched, we can no longer be blessed because God can no longer satisfy us. Only in heaven will our needs be sated.

23. Discuss the spiritual progression we see in these first four beatitudes – poor in spirit, mourning, meekness and finally hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

As we confess and lament our sins (5:3), we are led to acknowledge the truth about ourselves and we mourn for our sinful condition (5:4). The gospel comfort given us by the Holy Spirit changes our hearts to willingly and joyfully submit to our merciful God (5:5) thus creating an ongoing, insatiable hunger for his righteousness (5:6).

Discuss how these first four beatitudes may change the way you think of your own life and the priorities you set. What will this move you to do?

The first four beatitudes discuss our relationship with God. The last four beatitudes discuss how this relationship affects how we see and treat others in this world.

Matthew 5:7 – “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

24. What does Jesus mean when he tells us to be merciful? To whom should we show mercy? Read some or all of these passages for insight: Matthew 18:21-22ff, Luke 10:25ff, all of Psalm 51, esp 1,10.

We are talking of the mercy that flows from our personal experiences with God's mercy in our lives. Mercy is shown when we don't receive what we deserve. When we realize the depravity of our lives, God's mercy shines even brighter as we bask in the merciful gift of a Savior. In thanksgiving our lives become filled with merciful acts as we seek to imitate and praise our merciful God. These acts may include helping those overcome by disaster, hunger or sickness, forgiving those who have wronged us, helping anyone who is struggling, calling a friend to repentance.

To whom we are to show mercy isn't stated. God is continually merciful and this is to be our model. Throughout the New Testament we see person after person crying out to Jesus “Lord have mercy” and Jesus didn't disappoint them. We are given the bad example of the unmerciful[2] servant (Matt 18:21ff), the [3]good example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25ff). There is no end of people to whom we are to show mercy.

25. Just look at all the charitable activities of this world. Aren't most people in this world merciful? Read Ephesians 2:10, Hebrews 11:6, Matthew 23:23 to help understand what God sees as merciful.

God uses his people and many heathen also, to perform all kinds of charitable acts and thus blesses the lives of many believers and unbelievers alike. But only those good works and merciful acts that flow in response to faith are pleasing to him and thus are a blessing for the one showing mercy. Worldly philanthropists are rewarded in various ways by this world but those who show Christian mercy, motivated entirely by faith without seeking the recognition and rewards of this world, are rewarded by God in ways we can't begin to fathom. We can't resolve to do God-pleasing merciful acts. Only those motivated by our faith please our Maker.

26. How do the merciful "receive mercy?" See 2 Corinthians 9:6, Galatians 6:7-10

"You reap what you sow" is a Biblical saying that has made its way into the popular vernacular. This principle is one that God uses to bless both believers and heathens. [4] There will be troubles in this life and there will be times when we will be dependent on the mercy of others.

But believers experience a deeper, bigger mercy. The concept of mercy is so very fundamental in all that Jesus showed us during his life on earth; it's the very purpose that he came into this world to begin with. Try going to Biblegateway.com and searching for the word "mercy." You may be amazed at the times people called out to Jesus asking for mercy and also how many times mercy is included in a greeting and farewell between believers. It's a big thing!

Receiving mercy in this life is quite a blessing. But the faithful will also be given the most merciful gift of all when they are given eternal life in heaven, based on God's merciful gift of a Savior who paid the full price for our sins. This is the ultimate definition of mercy.

27. Share something that this study has helped you understand better. Share something that this will move you to do differently.

Closing Thought:

Lord Help Us Ever to Retain

CW 514

Lord help us ever to retain the catechism's doctrine plain
As Luther taught the Word of truth in simple style to tender youth.

Help us your holy law to learn, to mourn our sin and from it turn
In faith to you and to your Son and Holy Spirit Three in One.

Hear us, dear Father, when we pray for needed help from day to day
That as your children we may live, whom you in baptism did receive.

Lord, when we fall or go astray, absolve and lift us up we pray;
And through the sacrament increase our faith till we depart in peace.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Precious Savior, Holy Spirit, you are truly worthy of our praise. Your love and mercy are more than we can fathom and yet they fill each minute of every day. We thank you for graciously giving us a Savior that we may be reconciled with you, and for working faith in our hearts that we may be fully blessed by your bountiful gifts. We thank you for giving us a desire to please

you with our lives and for revealing yourself through your Holy Word. Make our sins visible to us, work repentance in our hearts and we humbly ask you to forgive us (especially for....). Be near when temptations come that we may not fall into sin. Renew our hearts that we may live our lives to your glory. We come in the name of Jesus, confident that you hear and answer our prayers. Amen.

Lesson 4

Blessed are Pure in Heart; Blessed are the Peacemakers **Matthew 5:8-9**

Opening Prayer

Read Matthew 5:3-9

28. Review: what key thoughts do you remember from the earlier studies?

I recognize I am morally bankrupt, can do absolutely nothing to please God and am in desperate need of a Savior. The beatitudes are Jesus' way of showing how we will be blessed as we live lives guided only by his teachings and how we will stand out from the rest of the world because of the huge difference in our motivations and actions.

Matthew 5:8 – “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

29. Describe what you think Jesus meant when he talked of “those who are pure in heart”. See Psalm 51:6-12, 1 Timothy 1:5, or Matthew 23:25-28 for insight.

The pure in heart are those who repent, ask God to remove the sins from their hearts, and with God's grace go about doing his will. Martin Luther said “Though a common laborer may be dirty and sooty or may smell because he is covered with dirt...and though he stinks outwardly, inwardly he is pure incense before God because he ponders the Word of God in his heart and obeys it.” Someone with a pure heart is single-minded and focused solely on pleasing God. He is free from falsehoods, utterly sincere, and completely transparent in his thoughts, motives and actions. Anything that is devious, hypocritical, deceitful, done with a hidden motive or selfish interest is abhorrent to him. With the heart being the center of both the physical and spiritual life, it only makes sense that what is in the heart will show itself in words, actions and motives.

30. How can one become pure in heart? See Galatians 5:19-24, Philippians 4:8-9.

Purity of heart is impossible without God as we are by nature filled with all kinds of ugly sin. With the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we bear much good fruit, not from moral discipline but from our singular focus on Christ. This side of heaven we will not have a perfectly pure heart because we know we daily sin. Through our Baptism we are given a new (wo)man who does desire to do good and finds sin abhorrent. In grace God forgives us, blesses us with a contrite heart and we grow in faith and purity of heart.

31. How or when will we see God? 1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 John 3:1-3, John 14:2-3, John 17:24, Job 19:25-27

Jesus told his disciples that those who saw him, had seen the Father. He and the Father are one. (John 14:9,11) this is the first stage of the fulfillment of this blessing. As we grow in our knowledge

of Jesus, we see his grace, mercy, goodness and love all around, though, because of sin, this vision won't be clear and unblemished. But this type of seeing will be followed by something much more magnificent. The greatest joy of heaven will be seeing and praising God. Jesus has promised to take us to heaven so that we can be with him for eternity. Could there ever be any greater comfort as we walk the path of this life than knowing that Jesus himself has prayed for us and wants us to be with him in heaven?

32. Has this discussion given you new insight into your life and motivation, where you will get your strength for carrying on with your daily tasks?

Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

33. What do you think Jesus means by “peacemakers”? 1 Peter 3:8-11, Hebrews 12:14

Being a peacemaker seems to follow in a natural sequence from a pure heart. Most often conflict is a result of an impure heart and all the things that go with it. But conflict will be the inevitable result of a life focused on Christ, even within one's own family, because God demands total commitment and top priority and this will often cause [dissension](#)[5].

Yet we do not seek conflict but are called to peace and actively pursue it, striving to live peaceably with others in the spirit of the Prince of Peace and attempt to cultivate peace wherever we go. In particular we will want to live in peace and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ who understand peace in terms of God's Word.

God asks us to love others with the love that he has for us, an unconditional selfless love that often exceeds anything that we can comprehend. Peacemakers will seek reconciliation, they will selflessly forgive.

34. How can one become a peacemaker? Galatians 5:22-25, Matthew 5:44-45, Psalm 133, Matthew 18:15-17

God is the author of peace and reconciliation. He modeled this when he sent his Son into this world to reconcile us with him. [6]

God paid a great price for our peace; so we too may find peacemaking costly. Peacemaking goes beyond appeasement. It means the pain of apologizing and seeking forgiveness, the pain of forgiving even when we have been grievously wronged; it's the agony of pointing out sin and calling our brothers and sisters to repentance and peace with God. The true peace of the church is something to be closely guarded. Should a brother or sister in Christ become contentious or stubborn or serious discord is present, the issue must be addressed quickly, in love, and completely to bring peace back into the lives of all affected. This peacemaking is only possible with God's help and his work in our heart.

Peacemaking requires us to listen, ridding our hearts of prejudice, striving to understand both points of view, risking misunderstanding and ingratitude, even failure. It requires wisdom, tact, patience, and love.

To be a peacemaker we must see others as God sees them and remember they are sinners just as I am a sinner, and Jesus died for their sins just as he died for my sins. If God can forgive and make peace with this person, who am I to do any less.

35. What does it mean to be “called the sons of God?” Galatians 4:4-7

Only God can call someone his son and make that person an heir of eternal life. Being called a son is different than being called a child of God. A child receives tender affection, but a son receives an inheritance and it is a title of dignity and high standing. The same one who sent his Son to make peace between God and the men and women of this world will acknowledge as his sons those who, in the spirit of his Son, make peace. Ladies, we are sons!!!

36. What key thoughts do you take away from the study today? How might this move you to do something differently?

Closing Thoughts:

Love in Christ is Strong and Living

CW 490

Love in Christ is strong and living, Binding faithful hearts in one;
Love in Christ is true and giving – May his will in us be done!

Love is patient and forbearing, Clothed in Christ's humility,
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring, reaching out in charity.

Love in Christ abides forever, fainting not when ills attend;
Love, forgiving and forgiven, shall endure until life's end.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Precious Savior, Holy Spirit, you are truly worthy of our praise. Your love and mercy are more than we can fathom and yet they fill each minute of every day. We thank you for graciously giving us a Savior that we may be reconciled with you, and for working faith in our hearts that we may be fully blessed by your bountiful gifts. We thank you for giving us a desire to please you with our lives and for revealing yourself through your Holy Word. Make our sins visible to us, work repentance in our hearts and we humbly ask you to forgive us (especially for....). Be near when temptations come that we may not fall into sin. Renew our hearts that we may live our lives to your glory. We come in the name of Jesus, confident that you hear and answer our prayers. Amen.

Lesson 5

Blessed are Those Persecuted for Righteousness And Conclusion

Matthew 5:10-16

Opening Prayer

Read Matthew 5:3-12

37. Review: what key thoughts do you remember from the earlier studies?

I recognize I am morally bankrupt, can do absolutely nothing to please God and am in desperate need of a Savior. The beatitudes are Jesus way of showing how we will be blessed as we live lives guided only by his teachings and how we will stand out from the rest of the world because of the huge difference in our motivations and actions. They reassure me of the exceptional blessings that are mine through Christ.

Matthew 5:10-12 – “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

38. Verse 9 announces blessings on the peacemakers and it is followed by a blessing for those who are persecuted which is stated twice! Peace and persecution don't seem to go together. Why do you think this blessing is repeated? Why do you think Jesus ends these beatitudes with this message? Acts 5:41, 2 Timothy 3:12

It may be repeated to mark an emphatic conclusion to this section of Scripture. It may also be an encouragement that when we live lives according to these beatitudes, we can expect persecution, and even welcome it (rejoice!); not run from it but allow it to happen. Jesus points us to the many heroes of faith that have come before us to show us that their persecution was difficult but they endured even to the point of martyrdom, and God will do the same for each of us. Jesus was persecuted even to the point of death; why should we who claim to be his followers expect anything different?

What does it mean to be “persecuted for righteousness?” John 15:18-19, 1 Peter 4:12-16, Luke 6: 26

The word righteous describes something that is right with God, in alignment with his will. The concept of righteousness is fundamental to all of Scripture. Through grace one is pronounced righteous by God according to his divine standards alone (see vs 6). God declares his believers righteous but the world declares them abominable and thus turns against them.

Blessings come to those who confess their faith and live up to it in their lives regardless of what the world may send their way because God is strengthening and purifying them. Being persecuted for

righteousness means a Christian suffers because of their character and the lives they lead in submission to God's will. We can view our days on this earth as nothing more than a short journey to our eternal home. What people on this earth think of us while we are here is not nearly as important as what God thinks of us for eternity.

One who is persecuted for righteousness will not retaliate like an unbeliever, sulk like a child, fill their hearts with self-pity, grin and bear it like a stoic or pretend to enjoy it like a masochist, but will be grateful that God loves them enough to test and strengthen their faith in this way.

Someone once asked if you were on trial for being a Christian would there be enough proof to find you guilty. If you are persecuted for righteousness, there is enough proof.

39. How can one possibly withstand persecution or even death for the sake of Christ? Colossians 3:16, Acts 14:21-22, Hebrews 10:25, Romans 8:35-39, Romans 8:28, James 4:7

Certainly no one is able to stand up to persecution without an extra dose of God's grace. This may be the reason this beatitude is the last in the list because it flows from a regular application of living a life with a singular focus on pleasing God and denying the message of this world. By God's grace, the ability to withstand persecution flows from a continual study of God's Word, from disciplined decisions guided by God's Word, from encouragement given by fellow believers, from regular worship, from use of the Sacraments, from confidence in God's promises, from daily repentance and receiving God's forgiveness.

40. What does it mean to be rewarded in heaven? Romans 6:23, John 14:2-3

We aren't rewarded because of anything thing we do or any persecution we endure. Our debt to God is so huge we cannot even begin to repay it say nothing of earning any merit beyond repayment. Our reward is purely a gift of grace and we praise God for making it a reward so disproportionately larger than our actions warrant. And so we receive a reward of grace, not of merit and for this, we fall to our knees and praise God. Our reward of grace is eternal life with our Almighty God, in complete alignment with his will. Come quickly Lord Jesus.

41. Has this discussion given you new insight into your ability to face the persecutions that may come your way? What might you add to your prayers with this realization?

Conclusion:

Matthew 5:13-16 – “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world”

42. Read Matthew 5:13-16. Why might Jesus have followed the beatitudes with the idea of his disciples being the salt of the earth and the light of the world?

Jesus is bringing home the magnitude of our calling as his disciples. This is a huge responsibility for each of us and now Jesus is going to explain a bit more about the impact he expects his followers to have in this world. For this he employs two metaphors: salt and light.

These two show us that Christians are to have a double influence on the secular world. We arrest the world's decay and we also bring light into its darkness. We work not just to stop the spread of evil but to promote the spread of truth. In this way, we glorify God and his will is accomplished.

43. Salt is used both to give flavor and also as a preservative. What does it mean for a follower of Christ to be called the salt of the earth?

Only the disciples are the salt, no one else qualifies; not philosophers, philanthropists, scientists, law givers or anyone else.

Salt is used both to make food palatable and also as a preservative. This world is a cesspool of sin and subject to increasing decay. Because of the influence of those who love God, this world is a better place in which to live, it is still here and has not yet been totally destroyed. Without Christians the world would be not just be tasteless, but rancid and possibly not even in existence any longer.

Salt penetrates everything it touches. All by itself, it has little value; it must be used to add value. Christians also act as a penetrating force as they work to counteract the rottenness of worldly forces on society. They help preserve souls as they preach the law and the hopeless condition of the human condition and the gospel message of salvation. As God transforms hearts, these new Christians add more salt to this world.

Christians are worthless if they do not use their saltiness.

44. What does it mean for a follower of Christ to be called the light of the world?

What the sun is to the physical world, the Christian is to the spiritual world as Christ shines through their lives into the dark world. Lives that are lived to the glory of God cannot be hidden but will be noticed; a Christian will be noticed by his daily life, his talk, his decisions, his actions, his values, his priorities. Being the light of the world goes beyond just doing good things as this cannot save any soul. A believer must preach the Law and Gospel in order to penetrate the darkness of an unbelieving heart.

45. What key thoughts do you take away from the study? How might this move you to do something differently in your life?

Closing Thought:

Take My Life and Let it be

CW 469

Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee.
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart – it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love my Lord I pour at your feet its treasures store.
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Precious Savior, Holy Spirit, you are truly worthy of our praise. Your love and mercy are more than we can fathom and yet they fill each minute of every day. We thank you for

graciously giving us a Savior that we may be reconciled with you, and for working faith in our hearts that we may be fully blessed by your bountiful gifts. We thank you for giving us a desire to please you with our lives and for revealing yourself through your Holy Word. Make our sins visible to us, work repentance in our hearts and we humbly ask you to forgive us for all things (especially for....). Be near when temptations come that we may not fall into sin. Renew our hearts that we may live our lives to your glory. We come in the name of Jesus, confident that you hear and answer our prayers. Amen.

References:

Lenski, RCH, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, The Wartburg Press, 1943, pg179-200

Pelikan, Jaroslav, editor, *Luther's Works Vol 21: The Sermon on the Mount and The Magnificat*,
Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, MO, 1956, pg 7-57

Scott, John R.W., *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, Inter-varsity Press, Downers Grove,
IL, pg 15-68

Wenzel, Martin H, editor, *The Wenzel Commentary*, Arrow Printing, Bemidji, MN, 1986. Pg 171-181